

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING TELEGRAM FROM AMMAN DATED AUGUST 30, 1977
SENT SECSTATE WASHDC, JERUSALEM INFO DAMASCUS, TEL AVIV
IS REPEATED TO YOU: QUOTE

S E C R E T AMMAN 6166

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, SY, US, XF

SUBJECT: PROFESSOR SAFRAN REPORT ON MEETING WITH SYRIAN
PRESIDENTIAL ADVISOR

FOR NEA ATHERTON FROM PICKERING

1. PROFESSOR NDAV SAFRAN SAW ME MORNING AUGUST
29. HE HAD JUST RETURNED FROM SYRIA WHERE HE
HAD MET WITH KHADDAM'S DEPUTY (AL-HIMA?) AND
ADIB DAOUDI, SPECIAL ASSISTANT TO PRESIDENT
ASAD. SAFRAN WAS PLEASED AND EXCITED ABOUT
HIS MEETING WITH DAOUDI WHICH FOLLOWED A DIS-
CUSSION WITH FORMER SYRIAN OFFICIAL (AL-HIMA) AND WHICH
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WAS ARRANGED BY THAT OFFICIAL. SAFRAN TOLD
ME HE SPENT MOST OF HIS CONVERSATION TALKING
TO DAOUDI ABOUT THE WISDOM AND NEED FOR SYRIA
TO ACCEPT EVOLVING BILATERAL FOREIGN MINISTERS'
MEETINGS IN WASHINGTON AND NEW YORK INTO A
WORKING GROUP WHICH MIGHT INCLUDE ISRAELI
PARTICIPATION ALONG WITH U.S. AND ARAB FOREIGN MINISTERS.

2. SAFRAN PROVIDED ME WITH A WRITTEN REPORT OF HIS CONVERSATIONS WHICH I AM PASSING ON BELOW. I TOLD SAFRAN THAT HE APPEARED TOO OPTIMISTIC ABOUT SYRIAN ACCEPTANCE OF POSSIBILITIES OF DIRECT MEETINGS WITH ISRAELIS AND WITHOUT THE PLO. SAFRAN HIMSELF THEN AGREED WITH THE POINT AND COMMENTED THAT DAOUDI ENTERED NO RESERVATIONS IN TERMS OF HIS PROPOSAL TO DISCUSS WORKING GROUP IDEA WITH OTHER ARAB GOVERNMENTS. SAFRAN AGREED THAT DAOUDI MIGHT HAVE ASSUMED SAFRAN WOULD UNDERSTAND HE WOULD HAVE TO CHECK THIS WITH KHADDAM AND ASAD. ALTERNATIVELY, SAFRAN THOUGHT DAOUDI'S EGO MIGHT NOT PERMIT HIM TO ENTER THIS RESERVATION. OR MORE OPTIMISTICALLY THAT SYRIANS HAD BEEN TALKING OVER SITUATION THEMSELVES AND HAD ALREADY CONCLUDED SOME SUCH MOVE WAS NECESSARY.

3. SAFRAN SAID HE WAS ABLE TO GIVE AMBASSADOR MURPHY ONLY A CURSORY REPORT AND ASKED ME TO PROVIDE THE DEPARTMENT WITH THIS ADDITIONAL INFORMATION. I TOLD SAFRAN THAT OBVIOUSLY AMBASSADOR MURPHY WOULD BE IN A BETTER POSITION TO COMMENT ON DAOUDI'S REMARKS AND REACTIONS WHICH I FOUND INTERESTING AND OPTIMISTIC.

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4. BEGIN SAFRAN REPORT:
SUMMARY: IN THE COURSE OF TWO-AND-ONE-HALF HOUR DISCUSSION, DR. ADIB DAOUDI, POLITICAL ADVISER TO PRESIDENT ASAD AGREED TO PROPOSAL TO EVOLVE BILATERAL CONSULTATIONS IN NEW YORK INTO WORKING GROUP. DAOUDI ACCEPTED PROPOSAL WITHOUT VOICING QUALIFICATION OF SEEKING ASAD'S APPROVAL. PROMISED TO TAKE UP MATTER AT HIGHEST LEVEL WITH GOVERNMENTS OF EGYPT, JORDAN, SAUDI ARABIA. PRESUMPTION WAS THAT WE, FOR OUR PART, WILL FOLLOW UP ON MATTER.

ELABORATION: MY PRINCIPAL ARGUMENT WAS THAT IT IS CRUCIAL TO GIVE PRESIDENT CARTER A FORUM IN WHICH SUBSTANTIAL PROGRESS CAN BE ACHIEVED IN DEFINING CONCRETELY THE QUALITY OF PEACE BEFORE CARTER CAN FACE ISRAEL GOVERNMENT ON QUESTION OF BOUNDARIES AND OTHER ISSUES.

ALSO EFFECTIVE WAS THE ARGUMENT THAT

ASSEMBLING OF WORKING GROUP ITSELF AND PROGRESS IN DEFINING QUALITY OF PEACE WOULD CONSTITUTE A SUCCESS FOR CARTER THAT WOULD, TOGETHER WITH ATTENDANT HOPEFUL CLIMATE OF OPINION, STRONGLY COMMIT HIM PSYCHOLOGICALLY TO SEE PEACE PROCESS THROUGH.

OTHERWISE, PRESENT LOGJAM MIGHT DISCOURAGE CARTER ABOUT CHANCES OF ACHIEVING PEACE AND LEAD HIM TO THINK IN TERMS OF CONTAINING CONFLICT RATHER THAN SOLVING IT. CONTAINING CONFLICT CANNOT POSSIBLY BE IN INTEREST OF ARABS, AND CAN LEAD TO DEFECTIONS WHICH WOULD IMPAIR ARAB SOLIDARITY.

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IN THE COURSE OF THE DISCUSSION, DAOUDI HAD ECHOED DOUBT OF "SKEPTICS" IN SYRIA ABOUT REAL AMERICAN INTEREST IN A SETTLEMENT, AND THEIR SUSPICION THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS MERELY OUT TO SPLIT THE ARABS, ISOLATE PLO, AND SPOIL SOVIET-ARAB RELATIONS. I PRESENTED AN ELABORATE ARGUMENT ABOUT THE AMERICAN INTEREST IN ACHIEVING A SETTLEMENT IN WHICH THE FOLLOWING POINTS SEEMED TO REGISTER PARTICULARLY WELL:

A) HISTORICALLY-PROVEN IMPOSSIBILITY OF CONTAINING CONFLICT; B) DANGER OF EROSION OF PRESENT FAVORABLE AMERICAN POSITION IN AREA, ESPECIALLY OF RESURGENCE OF RADICALISM AND SOVIET-INFLUENCE AND THEIR IMPACT ON SAUDI STABILITY; C) ESCALATION OF ARMS RACE IN CASE OF STALEMATE AND MOUNTING COSTS OF KEEPING MILITARY BALANCE; D) DANGER OF NUCLEAR PROLIFERATION AND ITS CONSEQUENCES; E) FURTHER RIGIDIFICATION OF ISRAELI OPINION AND POSITION.

REGARDING FEAR OF OUR SPLITTING ARABS, I POINTED OUT THAT WORKING GROUP IDEA WOULD DO JUST THE OPPOSITE, AND THAT IT IS ONLY IF THE U.S. IS COMPELLED TO SWITCH FROM STRATEGY OF SEEKING SETTLEMENT TO STRATEGY OF CONTAINING CONFLICT THAT DIVISIVE TACTICS BECOME NECESSARY TO PREVENT WAR COALITIONS.

REGARDING SOVIET ROLE, I POINTED OUT THAT ONLY WAY TO BRING SOVIETS INTO THE PICTURE WAS
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GENEVA, AND ONLY WAY TO GET TO GENEVA WAS
THROUGH PREPARATION OF WORKING GROUP.

ON PALESTINIAN QUESTION I POINTED OUT THAT
WORKING GROUP OFFERED A GOOD WAY TO OVERCOME
PRESENT HURDLES. IF WORKING GROUP GETS
NOWHERE, PLO WOULD HAVE AVOIDED COMPROMISING
ITS POSITION. IF IT MAKES PROGRESS IN GIVING
BODY TO CARTER'S PRINCIPLES, THEN THE TERMS OF
PALESTINIAN ROLE WOULD BE BETTER DEFINED. IF
PLO ACCEPTS THOSE TERMS, THERE WOULD BE MUCH
GREATER SUPPORT FOR ITS BEING BROUGHT IN.
IF IT REFUSES, THEN IT WOULD NOT DESERVE TO BE
BROUGHT IN EVEN IN VIEW OF ARAB STATES
THEMSELVES.

IN ANY CASE, I ADDED, SYRIANS CAN INSIST
THAT AGENDA OF WORKING GROUP INCLUDE DEALING
WITH PALESTINIAN QUESTION AS A MATTER OF HIGH
PRIORITY.

REMARKS: THE SYRIANS WERE DEEPLY HURT
THAT WE DID NOT ASCERTAIN THAT SADAT HAD CLEARED
IDEA OF WORKING GROUP WITH THEM. IT IS VERY
IMPORTANT IN FOLLOWING UP ON NEW PROSPECTS OF
WORKING GROUP THAT WE APPROACH SYRIANS FIRST
AND FOLLOW ON WITH EGYPT ONLY AFTER WE MADE
CERTAIN SYRIANS GET PROPER CREDIT FOR REVIVAL
OF CONCEPT. END SAFRAN REPORT

5. COMMENT: SAFRAN VERY MUCH TAKEN WITH
IDEA THAT ISRAELI PRIME MINISTER BEGIN IS
INSISTING ON SEEING WHAT U.S. CAN DO TO GAIN
ARAB COMMITMENT TO FULL PEACE BEFORE APPROACHING
DIFFICULT QUESTION OF TERRITORIAL WITHDRAWALS
ON THE WEST BANK AND GAZA. SAFRAN SEEMS TO
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HAVE IMPRESSION THAT BEGIN IS POSSIBLY LIKELY
TO BE MORE FORTHCOMING ON TERRITORIAL WITHDRAWALS
UNDER SUCH CIRCUMSTANCES,
ALTHOUGH HE GAVE ME NO EVIDENCE FOR THIS. AS
HE DOES IN HIS REPORT, HE MADE POINT ORALLY
TO ME THAT SYRIANS WERE IMPRESSED BOTH BY THE
NEED TO GIVE THE PRESIDENT "SOMETHING"

ON WHICH TO CONTINUE TO BASE FULL PROGRESS TOWARD
PEACE AND THAT THE WORKING GROUP WOULD FULFILL THIS
NEED, AND ALTERNATIVELY MAKE IT POSSIBLE TO
AVOID PRESIDENT CARTER'S REACHING THE CON-
CLUSION THAT NO FURTHER PROGRESS WAS POSSIBLE
AND ABANDON OR TONE DOWN HIS CURRENT EFFORTS.
SAFRAN CONCLUSION THAT SYRIANS WERE STUNG
WITH LACK OF PRIOR ARAB CONSULTATION,
SPECIFICALLY INCLUDING THEM, IN CONNECTION
WITH THE WORKING GROUP PROPOSAL, ALSO SQUARES
WITH THEIR SENSITIVITY OVER SAUDI AND
EGYPTIAN PRE-EMINENT ROLE IN DEALING WITH
THE PLO ON 242 AS ANALYZED IN AMBASSADOR MURPHY'S
RECENT EXCELLENT ASSESSMENT OF THE REASONS
FOR THE PLO AUGUST 26 DECISION (DAMASCUS 5496).

6. I DO NOT KNOW TO WHAT EXTENT YOU MAY HAVE
BRIEFED SAFRAN OR CONSIDER HIM AN EMISSARY.
HE IS, AS USUAL, WELL-INFORMED, THOROUGH AND
DISCREET IN HIS CONVERSATIONS. NEVERTHELESS
HIS OWN PERSONAL INITIATIVE ABOVE COMES CLOSE
TO ACTING BEYOND THE PERSONAL ROLE OF AN
INQUIRING ACADEMIC AND COULD LEAD JORDANIANS
AND SYRIANS INTO BELIEVING HE HAS A BROADER
BRIEF FROM THE USG THAN SEEMS TO BE THE CASE.
WOULD BE GRATEFULL IF YOU WOULD LET MEKNOW IF
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YMU HAVE ANY WORDS OF CAUTION FOR HIM OR
THE GOJ. HE GOES AUGUST 30 ACROSS THE BRIDGE
TO TEL AVIV AND JERUSALEM. HE HAS JUST CALLED
ME TO SAY THAT CROWN PRINCE HASSAN, WHOM HE DEBRIEFED TODAY,
WANTS HIM TO RETURN TO TALK TO KING ABOUT SEPTEMBER 12.
PICKERING UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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